

342 raised. An old shoe is also generally found along with the iron and
789 stones under the floor. Occasionally bits of dried *tulasi* plant (*Ocimum*
[824] *sacrum*) are also scattered about the floor or again a bunch of *tulasi*
may be tied at the base of the central pole. This pole stuck in the
centre of the house being built is not a part of the permanent construc-
tion, but is a device to render the building work satisfactory and
protect the home from demons taking possession of it while in the
process of construction. On the pole can be seen hanging a basket
and in this basket were found pieces of iron and tin, and bits of the
outer *leopard*¹ covering of another house. It may be taken from the
walls of a house in which a happily married and prosperous family lived.
[337] In an earthen pot placed on the floor there was a yellowish liquid. The
builder told us that this was water, but it had the appearance of cow's
urine, although this could not be confirmed. Occasionally there is a
[778] sign of a little shrine about the construction somewhere, which shows
[782] signs of the presentation of the *hom* offering.

342 The inner floor of the house will be filled in and packed down
after the walls are up. In dwellings of good construction the floor of the
interior of the house should be higher than the veranda floor, and the
veranda floor should, in turn, be higher than that of the courtyard.
[782] Kol houses have no windows, and the door-ways are low. On enter-
[638] ing one must bow, or even get down on hands and knees. Bowing as
one enters is said to be a method of showing respect to the household
deities. Windows might let in evil forces, hence none is included.

342 Women may aid in building the house, but their work is limited
462 to assisting in building the walls and floor of the house by bringing
the earth or water, mixing them and helping to place the mud in the
proper place. They take no part, however, in the construction of the
roof. This is not a woman's job, and for a woman to get upon a roof

● [562] is taboo—a thing that requires punishment or a fine.
[784]

Kols are able to construct the whole house. If the roof is to
342 be of grass, the grass is brought from the forests, and *kusa* (*Poa*
[824] *pynosuroides*) and *duba* (*Agrostis tinearis*) are generally used. If
tiles are utilized, cheap country tiles are obtained from the village
[323] potter. The Kol puts the tiles on the roof himself. The only
[335] thing which he cannot make is the door and frame, but these
may be bought quite cheaply in the markets or may be made for him
by the village carpenter. They are set in the opening left for the door,
and the mud is packed in about them. There is usually but one door
to a house. The more primitive types of houses so common among

1 See Glossary, Appendix VI, for meanings of Vernacular terms.

THE MARRIAGE CYCLE : SADI

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(3) *The Wedding Ceremony. The Sadi.* The actual wedding is divided into three parts, each occurring on a different day and the whole lasting three days. There is first the arrival of the *barat*—the party which brings the bridegroom and which reaches the girl's village on the evening of the first day. The next part occurs on the following night and is the wedding proper, the *sadi*; and finally the bridegroom departs for his own home on the third day and this is called the *bida* or farewell.

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(a) *Barat.* A day or two after the parching of the *laws* there are preparations at the bridegroom's house for the departure from thence for the house of the bride. The *barat* is usually so planned that it arrives at the girl's village just after dusk. The *barat* is made up entirely of men, and women are not permitted to accompany the procession. Before the *barat* can leave there is a feast given to its members by the women of the family. Following this the bridegroom is put into a *palki* or litter. The party also takes with it various things needed for the *sadi* including the *laws*, a *barain* (small whitish-coloured earthenware pot decorated with yellow figures and in which are carried a *seer* of rice and, if in season, two mangoes), seven *dips* (earthenware lamps), and a *dahingar* (a decorated earthen pot like the *barain* in which *dahi*—curds—are kept). These things are carried by the party in baskets on their heads, but in the *palki* will be put the *sensur*, *kankan* (black and red beads strung on a thin iron wire), some toys and *gobar* (cowdung). Some one to beat the drum should accompany the party which leaves the boy's village amid music and singing. The women who remain behind are busy preparing for the return of the bridegroom and his party three days later.

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The procession should not arrive in the village until night has fallen. Upon its arrival it does not at once enter the village, but stops some distance away and with drums and singing announces its presence. The girl's party which has been waiting the arrival of the *barat* is now summoned by her father. The women of the bride's party accompany the men in greeting the *barat* and the group proceeds to the edge of the village with lights, the person carrying the leading light being either the girl's sister or a female cousin. This light is carried on top of an earthen jar resting on the head in a manner similar to the way the light is carried at the *mangarmati* time. The men of the party bring a *chhallari*, or an umbrella made of bamboo branches and leaves from the *palasa* tree. Like the crown in Europe, the umbrella in village India is essentially a symbol of sovereignty. A *maskal*, or torch on the end of a pole is also brought and waved about in imitation of a battle. The men of the two parties now meet and greet one

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THE KOLS OF CENTRAL INDIA

1. *Barela*: Persons reported: Houses reporting: Total for class.

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9	..	1	..	9
8	..	2	..	16
7	..	1	..	7
6	..	5	..	30
5	..	10	..	50
4	..	8	..	32
3	..	16	..	48
2	..	12	..	24
1	..	4	..	4
		59	..	220

2. *Kharara Ghat*:

9	..	2	..	18
8	..	..	..	..
7	..	2	..	14
6	..	5	..	30
5	..	6	..	30
4	..	6	..	24
3	..	4	..	12
2	..	4	..	8
		39	..	136

[177] In the case of the Barela Kols the lower average is due to two causes: the first is that the town is near the main road and as the Kols are much more Hinduized as a community there is a natural loss of household members who leave home for work in Jubbulpore. The second is that the health of the Barela Kols is far less satisfactory than of those in Kharara Ghat, for the town is much more open to infection, and illnesses are more numerous.

● 562 THE POSITION OF WOMEN. The place of women among the Kols can be said to be fairly high. There is a wholesome sense of equality among the sexes. The women do not keep themselves in seclusion (parda), and are generally free to go about on any errand. In Hinduized [177] sections they cover their heads in the presence of men or when they are outside their houses, but under primitive conditions they are not [593] so particular. In a general sense the husband is the main authority

PLACE OF THE WIFE

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in the family, but the wife is in no sense his slave and plays a large part in its control and management. All affairs are brought before the family for discussion and decision before final action is taken. If one party is not agreeable to a certain proposition the other tries by coaxing or by some other means to win his or her consent. Nevertheless this picture, given by the men, may be over bright, for it appears from close observation that the rights of the wives are much less than those of the men. She is not as free as the men are and it is not the custom for her to go here or there without hindrance. The woman has a certain amount of what might be called "personal property" and is not debarred from possessing it, though this is limited to her ornaments, her clothes and anything that she may make or acquire for her personal use. When the husband dies his property goes to the sons, but as long as she is living she must be supported by the sons. If there is no son, the property remains with her as long as she lives, but passes to the husband's male relatives at her death.

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The Kol widow is not subjected to the same disabilities as are found among certain classes of Hindus. She is not required to shave her head, nor discard her metal bangles and ornaments, nor wear a white sari. If young she may marry again, usually not less than a year after her husband's death, and if she is elderly she may go to live with her son or relatives. Widows are expected to make some contribution for their keep and are often found searching for fuel or roots and leaves.

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PLACE OF THE WIFE. After marriage the chief duties of the wife are to care for the house, prepare the meals and be a mother to her children. In between it is generally expected that she will find some means to supplement the family income, either by directly engaging in remunerative work, or by gathering roots and tubers from the jungle, cow dung from the roads and paths, or wood for the kitchen fire. Dried cow dung cakes are most generally used for the fire. She does the washing of clothes for herself and her children. Men wash their own clothes.

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During her monthly courses there is some interruption of her regular work. During that time she may prepare her own food, but is not permitted to prepare food for another. The man must do his own cooking or make some other arrangements for the time being. There are other taboos at this time; she must never touch men's clothes nor should milk of any kind be touched by her. She may bring water from the well for her own use, but such water is taboo to any other member of the family.

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562 There are at least two other things which a Kol woman must
 543 never do: she may not plough, nor climb up on the roof of a house.
 784 Such matters are looked upon as serious breaches of custom and deserve
 241 a penalty from the *panch*. Repeated enquiries elicited no recent
 481 violations of these taboos, and there was no definite statement as to
 what would be done in case they occurred. This latter taboo, however,
 probably has its exceptions, as we knew of a Kol woman helping to
 repair a roof on the mission house in Barela.

551 It is the rule that wives should never utter their husband's name
 513 and the same is true of the husband who should never call his wife by
 her name. They are addressed, rather, as the mother or father of the
 children. For example if the child's name is Makkhi the husband will
 address his wife as Makkhi's mother. There is another general pro-
 [561] hibition to the effect that a woman should never speak the name of a
 man older than herself; he should be addressed in some indirect way.

847 PARENTS AND CHILDREN. Kols say that children are Bhagawan's
 858 gifts to them in answer to Sheori's prayer. Both sexes are welcome
 842 in the home and there is no evidence that they favour one above the other.
 Abortion is all but unknown and it is considered an evil thing to attempt
 it. Apparently they know of no herb or plant growing in the jungle which
 would cause it.

868 When children are old enough they are assigned tasks about the
 house (there is no school besides this)—the girls learn cooking and other
 household duties, gather wood and cow dung, while the boys help herd
 goats or cattle, if any, or accompany their fathers to the fields where
 they play about and help to bring back its produce or the wood cut in
 the forest.

867 Almost no moral training, as such, is imparted, nor are the children
 [861] severely punished when discipline is called for. A slap over the ear
 is usually all that is attempted and more often than not this is adroitly
 dodged. On the whole Kol parents are over indulgent with their
 children. The sum of moral training was said to be "Don't steal, don't
 lie, don't hurt anyone." When they were asked about the type of
 religious instruction given to children they said: "We neither know,
 nor can we tell." What children learn is largely by observation and
 practice rather than by direct instruction. Among the more literate
 people of Northern India moral teaching is given through the reading
 of such literature as the Ramayana of Tulsi Das. The Kols, though,
 do not have even this, unless it so happens that a mendicant reads to
 them, nevertheless it would not appear that their morals are any worse
 than those who have considerable more light to guide them.

PROPERTY AND INHERITANCE

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Should a dispute arise over the division of the property the matter must be settled by the *pauch*. They will probably distribute it as equally as possible among the sons. Should this not be satisfactory to all concerned the sons have the right to appeal to the law courts of the land and have the matter settled there. Among Kols this is seldom, if ever, done.

The female members of the family do not enjoy equal rights with the males. A girl, when married, loses her membership in her family, and becomes a member of the new home. When she goes to live with her husband she takes nothing with her apart from her clothes and some personal adornments. It was noted by Russell and Hiralal that :

Succession among the Mundas passes to sons only. Failing there, the property goes to the father or brother if any..... Daughters get no share in the inheritance and are allotted among the sons just like livestock. Thus if a man dies leaving three sons and three daughters and thirty head of cattle, on a division each son would get ten head of cattle and one sister ; but should there be only one sister, they wait until she marries and divide the bride price.¹

This quotation, from their article on the Kols, does not apply to the specific Kol tribe, but nevertheless we found instances of this tendency.

There is a difference of opinion as to the disposition of the property if there are no sons and only girls in the family. In many places it was affirmed that property could pass to the daughters if there were no sons. This was always her own property and nothing could alienate it from her, not even her marriage. When such a girl is married she takes her property with her and such property is considered her own and does not become a portion of her husband's wealth. If she should ever leave his home due either to divorce or quarrel she still remains its owner. Keeping it thus in her name and under her control is a protection to her in case of need. At her death, such property, if still existing, is supposed to revert to her father's family, his brothers or their heirs. When a wife dies her clothes are disposed of as noted in Chapter VII. Her metal jewellery is kept and may be worn by a new wife or passed on to the sons.

¹ Russell and Hiralal, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. III, p. 515.

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CHAPTER IX

MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT

The Kols are fundamentally a primitive tribe, even though they have been for many years in contact with Hindu thought and life. It will be found therefore that they have outlooks which are properly termed animistic. This does not necessarily imply that their thought forms are simple and that a 'primitive' people have a 'primitive' outlook. Kol thought, though not philosophic, is complex and involved, and has behind it a long history. These beliefs are not limited to 'primitive' people either, but are shared with other groups living about them, and extend up into the very fabric of the thinking of intelligent Indians.

There are certain forces which are opposing this point of view, such as education, travel, books, and modern inventions, to say nothing of contacts with higher Hinduism and the political movements of the day. There are many ancient institutions such as caste, the authority of the Brahmins, and idolatry, which are being questioned at the present time; and these questionings have their repercussions among the villages and tend toward a sophisticated attitude toward many of the beliefs described below.

There are other forces which aid in the maintenance of animistic outlooks: ignorance of what is going on tends toward the *status quo*: women among the Kols are universally illiterate and are the stronghold of the old ways. Many a Kol says that he puts on charms for his wife's sake, but adds that he really does not believe that they do much good. Custom is another force very difficult to move. It is very strong over India and its persistence, in spite of knowledge to the contrary, is a thing which strikes an observer. Belief may change, but custom, though rationalized, remains as before.

A word of caution should be uttered concerning generalities in regard to animistic thought. There are few, if any, perfectly consistent generalizations which may be made concerning Kol beliefs and outlooks. For example, when the spirit world is described, one should not immediately conclude that all Kols enter into these concepts, any more than one should judge that all westerners regard the number thirteen with superstitious fear.

THE SPIRIT WORLD. To the average Kol all things animate and inanimate may be the abode of spirits of one sort or another.

[p. 175]

534 end are about the same, being from nine to twelve inches; the length is generally from twenty to twenty-five inches.

[325] 2. *The Timakia of Nagariya.* This instrument is the kettle-drum and has only the one playing surface. The shell is made out of copper, brass, or iron sheets riveted together. Proper tension of the leather is produced by means of the leathern strap interlaced over the metal. The *timakias* used by Kols, seldom have a head more than twelve to fourteen inches in diameter. They are played along with the *dholak*, but unlike it, the hands are not used upon the leather; the drum is beaten upon by means of two sticks which are sometimes curved.

Various sizes of these two drums are in use, and when more than one is being played they must be tuned up beforehand. Their cost varies from Rs. 1-8-0 to Rs. 5-0-0. Drums are used on all singing occasions: dances, birth, marriage and religious worship. Women never play them for that is the prerogative of the men folk.



Fig. 29. The Timakia

3. *The Kartel or Kartal.* This is a form of the cymbal, being in reality a cluster of cymbals. A piece of wood twelve to fourteen inches long has built upon it cymbals of varying sizes, so adjusted that they may slide along the stick. The ends of the stick are held in the hands and the whole is shaken at various angles in order to produce modulations of tones. The beat must be exactly that of the drums, hence it is a very difficult instrument to play satisfactorily; but expert players produce a most pleasing effect; in perfect resonance and rhythm.

4. *The Majira* or ordinary cymbals are of various sizes, but the type used by the Kols is usually about four inches in diameter and made of brass. One is held in each hand and they are manipulated so that there is modulation and variations of tone as well as perfect rhythm.

533 THE MAIN KINDS OF MELODY AND SONG. There are a number of types of songs sung by Kols, examples of which are found below. The main types and their chief characteristics will be briefly noted. The types vary both in rhythm and content.

533 what reluctant to repeat them unless they are sung under emotional excitement.

[831] 6. *Kabiri*. This is another obscene type sung mostly at the *Koli* season. It is said that the sexual act is described with obscene gestures. Kols say that it is called Kabiri as Kabirdas made and sang them. This is certainly a fiction. There may, however, be some Moslem influence in the songs, though this is open to doubt.

[177] 7. *Dohari*. A type of song in which the verses are made up of two lines. The word comes from *doha* meaning a couplet. The full *dohari* has twelve couplets of two lines each.

8. There have been some other types and varieties of types named by Kols, but no information about them seems to be available and Kols themselves do not know the niceties of them. Among such may be mentioned Kotwerhai, Bhumhai, Kolhai (said to be a form of the *dadar*), Badhwa, Katili, Birha, Bihari, Chhauhar and Barahmasi. Examples of most of these kinds will be found below.

● [562] Those songs are sung by both men and women, though on certain occasions one of these groups may do the most of the singing. Women, for example, do all the singing on the sixth night after birth (*Chhatti*); both sing at the time of wedding; at the periods of special religious worship it is generally the men who do the singing, although it is not unknown for the women to take a part.

KOL SONGS. Most of the songs sung by Kols are composed for special occasions, and the following songs are selected from a number collected by us in our visits among the Kols. They give an interesting insight into the Kol outlook on life. One finds the joys and sorrows of youth and love. An appreciation of nature is also evident, while many of the songs border on what many would consider indecent and questionable. Many songs centre about Ram and his victory over Rawana. Only a few of these are included. In Appendix III brief notations on certain of the songs will be found. The meanings of some of the songs are obscure and in many of them there are insinuations not easily grasped. In some cases only the composers, probably, know to what the songs allude and any translation is far from satisfactory. It is believed that the songs which follow are fairly typical of Kol songs in general. They are arranged topically in the main, though some songs fall into more than one classification. There are six divisions: 1. Songs of Nature; 2. Life: its Joys and Sorrows;

1 How Kabir's name came to be associated with these songs is a mystery. Kabir's songs are highly respectable and well-thought of. See above page 48.

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*Kya jano maya sukhi ke khanevale.
Garewa bharae apa ke liye—garewa ka ghalana,
Kya jano tumari ke pinevale.
Biriya banawa apa ke liya—biriya ruchana,
Kya jano mayapatta ke khanevale.
Seja bichhaonwa apa ke liya—sejiya sona,
Kya jano gudri ke sonewale.*

O dwellers in jungle, what do you know of singing and music?

I have cooked for you,—but how poor you make it out, for you have dry food always.

I have water ready for you,—but alas, will it please you? You who drink water from gourds?

Pan is ready too,—but you who use the leaves of the forest, can you enjoy this tender treat?

A bed is ready for you,—but tell me true:

How will you ever rest on such, O sleepers on rugs!

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DANCES. Dancing is found in connection with all happy occasions: births, weddings, feasts and festivals, but among the Kols it is only the women who dance. The men play and sing, but it is universally claimed that they never dance; it is considered effeminate to do so, for eunuchs dance, and since Kols are men they should not dance. In other groups among whom the Kols live, such as the Gonds and even the outcaste groups, the men-folk dance.

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There is one main type of dance among Kols called by the same name as the songs that are sung with it: the *dadra*. There are various forms of this dance, differing somewhat in rhythm and also in movement. To the casual observer they look almost the same, but to the Kol there are real differences. The *purani chal* and the *shailani* are forms of the *dadra*. The word *shailani* is literally 'satanic' or 'devilish' and in this form the words sung are very abusive and suggestive. On the occasion of such a dance with its accompanying songs, youths and maidens often elope.

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The famous *harma* dance of the Gonds, in which both men and women participate, is not danced by the Kols, though they know of it and have often watched it. Russell and Hiralal however, claim that the Kols dance it.¹

535 right hand to make certain movements with the fingers similar to snapping. The accompanying pictures, show something of the nature of the movements described.¹ The singing, which on this particular occasion was at the time of the *ganna*, was said to be *geli* or abuse. 535 The women frequently started a song and sang two or three lines of the same, while the men remained silent except for their instruments. 533 Then the men would answer in two or three lines and the women remain silent, though frequently making movements with the hands, or turning. Finally they all sang together. The men would frequently stop all of a sudden while a woman sang a solo which sometimes came from one and sometimes from the other dancer.

532 ART AND WORKMANSHIP. Our study of the Kols was disappointing in the results it yielded in the field of art, for we found practically no evidence of Kol art. Nothing which they make or draw or paint seems to be characteristic of them alone, and there is little they do in imitation. They do not ordinarily decorate their houses differently from their Hindu neighbours. Occasionally the doorways have a picture representing a peacock, as indicated on plate XX. The peacock motif was also found on the urns where wheat was stored. [825] Certain non-Kol houses, however, sometimes had the same symbol. There is apparently no taboo connected with the peacock, and the work was said to be entirely decorative. At the *holi* season the walls of the house which face the courtyard are frequently decorated with various figures. Plate XXI gives an idea of how this is done, and the drawing on the wall contains representations of tigers, [562] peacocks, birds, sunflowers, men, flowers in a pot, and a house. It was said that women and boys do this work, never the men.

463 Kols seem to be deficient in handiworks of any sort. They 285 never make baskets, wooden dishes, *dholaks*, beads nor ornaments; 301 they do no sewing, nor making of clothes nor embroidery work. The 322 mattress makers, the Kathariyas, come the nearest to having a handi- 294 craft, but it is not generally practised even by them. Most Kols will 296 mend clothes, if necessary, and this is mostly done by the men. There is the usual great need for handicrafts so sadly undeveloped in rural India. Occasionally they make their own beds and cots, and rope 383 for them is obtained from the stalks of rice called *bagai*. Such ropes 312 are also used for drawing water from the well. Sometimes they 324 fashion their own grinding mills from flatish stones by a chipping process. The children have no toys with which to play and none are constructed for them by their parents. Boys sometimes make a very 524 inferior type of bow and arrow with which to hunt birds. 957

¹ See plate XIX.

THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE KOLS

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pounds of wheat for a day's work in the field. If a cash arrangement is entered into, the rate is $1\frac{1}{2}$ annas for the same period of labour. In urban areas the situation is better. In 1911 the average wage was four annas a day. In 1921 it was six annas and ten years later it had increased to nine annas. It was our belief that seven years later wages had considerably fallen. Kol labourers in Jubbulpore industrial plants seldom received more than $5\frac{1}{2}$ annas per day while for the same work in Katni and Maihar they received but four annas. As a rule women workers received about half the above. [562]

It should be kept in mind that we have with the Kols the phenomenon of a primitive and backward people coming into the stream of rural and urban life. Many changes have occurred and many more will take place in the future. [178]

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. Kol people live together in groups, either in a section of the village or in a village of their own. Taking the village as a whole it would appear that they are economically well below the average. In certain places, however, they seem to be making a distinct advance as they continue to dwell there and develop a place for themselves in the life of the community. A resident of Barela, not himself a Kol, said that he had been watching them for many years. He said that twenty-five to thirty years ago they were very backward compared to their present condition. At that time they lived in grass huts, wore only loin cloths and in every respect were jungly, backward and inferior; but now the majority of Kols in Barela have houses with tiled roofs and thick mud walls, although the earlier type of dwelling is still occasionally found. This is indicated in Plate V. They now put on better clothing and in general their economic standard seems to be rising. In another place we found Kols putting tiles on their roofs which normally cost Rs. 20 per 1,000. These were being laid on top of the grass thatch. Country tile is more generally used and it costs from ten to twelve rupees to cover the house in this manner. Whenever the Kols are in contact with a somewhat higher culture and have a sense of security as regards lands and tenancy, they tend to make their houses much better than otherwise. Whenever we have asked groups why they have built and are living in such crude houses, they have told us that they do not know from one day to the next whether they will be staying there; and if they have to move on tomorrow they can easily pull up and leave. It is also said that this was the way their forefathers dwelt, and why should they do otherwise. Their employment is very uncertain and hence their houses are crude. [178] [435] [464]